



Johnson's Garden Talk

Newsletter archives ... for the friends and customers of Johnson's Garden Centers

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Fourth Generation of Nurserymen at Johnson's Garden Centers

Carolyn Utter, Editor

He is a self-professed "plant nerd." When asked for a definition of that term, he replied "someone who's more into plants than they should be."

Jeremy Johnson is one of the lucky ones. He has been able to combine his career with his obsession, as the Nursery Buyer at Johnson's Garden Center. Following in the footsteps of his father, Marty Johnson, Jeremy is the fourth generation working at Johnson's Garden Center which was started in the early '50s by Jeremy's great-grandfather, Orie Johnson, and his grandfather, Harold Johnson.

Jeremy also has been able to combine his involvement in the family business with his formal education, having graduated in 2001 from Wichita State University with a degree in Entrepreneurship. It's clear to see that Jeremy is on the road to succession in this growing family business.

And just like his parents, Marty and Nancy Johnson, Jeremy and his new bride Kassy Sullivan chose the month of May to exchange wedding vows. As this newsletter goes to press, Jeremy and Kassy are returning from their honeymoon in Europe. Their two-week getaway will include time in Paris and London. Because Kassy is a die-hard Beatles fan, they'll also spend some time in Liverpool.

Jeremy and Kassy met four years ago after she started to work at Johnson's Ridge Road store. It was "almost love at first sight" and they started dating a short time later. Kassy has a remarkable amount of energy and drive. She graduated in 2000 from Northwest High School and graduated in May of 2002 from Wichita State University. Yes, in just two years! She will continue her education this fall at WSU as she pursues her Ph.D. in psychology.

Jeremy's earliest memories of the garden center date back to when he was 3-4 years old. He remembers the ground-breaking at Johnson's East location and he remembers his great-grandfather Orie, who was "always in the greenhouse." His fondest memories of his grandfather, Harold, were the times they spent on long walks when Jeremy was about 10.

Jeremy followed in his dad's footsteps when he was younger, too. He remem-



Jeremy Johnson is the Nursery Buyer at Johnson's and he represents the fourth generation of Johnsons at the garden center.

bers tagging along when Marty went between the stores. Jeremy kept himself occupied on those visits "bothering everybody who was working."

Jeremy started working part-time at Johnson's during his sophomore year at Heights High School. After spending a year at Kansas State University, Jeremy transferred to WSU, settled in at Johnson's and became Johnson's full-time Nursery Buyer in the fall of 1999. As Nursery Buyer, Jeremy's favorite job is finding new and unusual plant material to offer our customers. He enjoys keeping in contact with suppliers and breeders to stay on the cutting edge of what's new in the nursery industry.

His search for the new and unusual has taken him on several buying trips including visits to Monrovia Nursery Co., Iseli Nursery and other smaller nurseries in Oregon.

So what's it like working as the fourth generation in a family- owned business? "It's interesting" Jeremy said as the look of a thousand different memories and emotions crossed his face. "You always take work home with you, the two are always combined."

Upon returning from their honeymoon, Jeremy and Kassy will settle in for the summer with Jeremy's dog Ringo, a one-year-old Australian Shepherd and Lab mix and with Daisy the cat. In the fall, Jeremy and Kassy will await the arrival of their new toy, a yellow and white 2003 Mini Cooper. Jeremy explained "It will be Kassy's car, but it's always been my infatuation to own a Mini Cooper." Sounds like this young couple has already learned the fine art of negotiation.